

member 12, as well as the rest of the boat ladder 13 (and, more generally, the boat) extends below the waterline.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A ramp for boarding swimming animals into a boat having a boat ladder, comprising in combination:

an elongated ramp member having a sidewall, a proximal end and a distal end;

a plurality of apertures formed through the sidewall;

a support assembly operationally connected to the ramp member and further comprising:

a cross member having a first and a second end and connected to the proximal end;

at least one hooked support member extending from the cross member for hookingly engaging the boat ladder;

at least one pivotable grip member pivotingly connected to the hooked support member;

a biasing member operationally connected to the pivotable grip member to urge the pivotable grip member in a first direction; and

an elongated lanyard member operationally connected to the pivotable grip member; and

a positioning assembly operationally connected to the ramp member and further comprising:

at least one first elongated positioning member having a first ramp-connecting end and a first boat ladder-engaging end;

an aperture-engaging protrusion extending from the first ramp-connecting end;

at least one second elongated member having a second ramp-connecting end and a first elongated positioning member connecting end; and

an elongated ladder-engaging member operationally connected to the first elongated positioning member;

wherein the first elongated member connecting end is operationally connected to the at least one first elongated member;

wherein movement of the lanyard member in a direction away from the pivotable grip member urges the pivotable grip member to pivot in a second direction opposite the first direction;

wherein the cross member is pivotably connected to the elongated ramp member;
and

wherein the aperture-engaging ~~pin~~protrusion is shaped to be removably engagable with the respective apertures.

2. (Original) The ramp of claim 1 wherein the elongated ramp member includes a pair of sidewalls disposed in parallel.

3. (Original) The ramp of claim 2 further comprising a plurality of stair-steps positioned between the sidewalls.

4. (Original) The ramp of claim 1 wherein the at least one hooked support member includes a first and a second hooked support member; and wherein each respective hooked support member is connected to a respective end of the cross member.

5. (Original) The ramp of claim 1 wherein the at least one first elongated positioning member includes a first and a second elongated positioning member; wherein the elongated ladder engaging member extends between the respective boat ladder engaging ends.

6. (Original) The ramp of claim 1 wherein the at least one second elongated member is pivotably connected to the at least one first elongated positioning member.

7. (Currently Amended) The ramp of claim 1 wherein the ramp member further comprises at least a pair of cavities formed therein and wherein the respective ends of the cross member interlockingly engage the respective cavities.

8. (Currently Amended) The ramp of claim 1 wherein the hooked support member may be lockingly engaged to the boat ladder by positioning the at least one pivotable grip member between the boat and the boat ladder and subsequently pivoting the pivotable grip member in the first direction.

9. (Original) An apparatus for boarding animals from the water into a boat, comprising in combination:

a plurality of spaced, generally parallel stair steps extending between a pair of elongated, generally parallel side rail members defining an elongated ladder member having a proximal end portion;

an elongated crossbeam member connected to the proximal end portion and extending between the generally parallel side rail members;

a support member extending from the crossbeam member;

a C-shaped ladder-engaging member connected to the support member;

a pivotable grip member pivotably coupled to the support member;

first biasing means operationally connected to the pivotable grip member for urging the pivotable grip member in a first direction of rotation;

second biasing means operationally connected to the pivotable grip member for urging the pivotable grip member in a second direction of rotation substantially opposite the first direction of rotation; and

an elongated strut assembly extendable from the elongated ladder member.

10. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the crossbeam is connected to the ~~platform~~proximal end portion by fasteners.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the first biasing means includes a spring coupled between the pivotable grip member and the support member; wherein the second biasing means includes a biasing connector coupled to the pivotable grip member; and wherein movement of the biasing connector away from the pivotable grip member urges the pivotable grip member to pivot in the second direction.

12. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 49 wherein the elongated ladder member further comprises a plurality of apertures formed therethrough; wherein the elongated strut assembly further comprises a plurality of pins extending therefrom; wherein each respective pin is sized to be engagable with a respective aperture; and wherein selection of which respective apertures with which to engage with the respective pins determines the disposition of the elongated ladder member relative to the boat.

13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the elongated strut assembly further comprises:

a first elongated strut member pivotably coupled to the elongated ladder member;

a second elongated strut member extending between the elongated ladder member and the first elongated strut member; and

a boat ladder engaging member connected to the first elongated strut member;

wherein the first and second elongated strut members are removably engagable to the elongated ladder member.

14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the elongated ladder member further comprises a plurality of spaced engagement apertures formed therein and wherein the first and second elongated strut members further comprise respective first and second engagement pins sized to engage the respective engagement apertures.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein the first elongated strut member further comprises a pair of substantially identical elongated positioning members; wherein the second elongated strut member further comprises a pair of substantially identical elongated stabilizing members; and wherein the boat ladder engaging member extends between the pair of elongated positioning members.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently Amended) ~~The system of claim 16~~A system for boarding animals into a boat, comprising in combination:

a boat ladder having a top rung extending between a first and a second elongated ladder member and affixed to a boat;

an elongated ramp member having a proximal end portion and a central body portion;

a support member extending from the proximal end portion and engagedly abutting the top rung;

a strut extending from the central body portion and engagedly abutting a respective elongated ladder member; and

a gripping assembly connected to the support member for releasably engaging the boat ladder;

wherein the gripping assembly further comprises:

at least one movable gripping member;

a first biasing member coupled to the gripping member to urge the gripping member to move in a first direction; and

a second biasing member coupled to the gripping member to urge the gripping member to move in a second direction opposite the first direction;

wherein the first biasing member provides a substantially constant first biasing force;

wherein the second biasing member provides a variable second biasing force;